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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, teach us the mystery of life. Help us not to be victims but victorious in this season of challenge and change.

Lord, lead us to a place of understanding in spite of trials and tribulations. Empower us to triumph because You love us. Today, instruct our lawmakers as they seek to do Your will. Inspire them to focus on the priorities of Your providence.

Lord, show them Your truth so that they will be instruments of Your purposes. Transform their lives from a hurried succession of days into a walk with You that brings enduring peace.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. LEAHY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, today, the Senate is going to continue focusing on confirming even more of President Biden's highly qualified nominees, both to serve in his administration and for lifetime appointments on the Federal bench.

Yesterday, we confirmed three more district judges through this Chamber, each with bipartisan support. We are going to continue today with two more nominees, and I hope we can see continued bipartisan cooperation.

In less than a year, Senate Democrats have worked swiftly and decisively to fill vacancies on the Federal bench with qualified, mainstream, and dedicated jurists. We are well on our way to making today's Federal bench the most diverse in a long, long time. Through September, at least three-quarters of President Biden's circuit-level nominees have been people of color.

Let me say that again because that makes me proud. Through September, at least three-quarters of President Biden's circuit-level nominees have been people of color.

Nearly a third of all of President Biden's nominees are former public defenders, and several of them have impressive backgrounds as civil rights lawyers, voting rights champions, and experience outside the well-trodden path of corporate law or Federal prosecution.

By focusing intentionally on confirming judges that bring both personal and professional experience to the judiciary, we are expanding the possibili-

ties of who merits consideration to the bench at all.

Judges, obviously, are an essential component of a healthy democracy. We will strengthen the public's trust in a fair, independent judiciary if the bench better reflects the rich diversity of this country, while adhering to the rule of law.

One confirmation at a time, Democrats are swiftly restoring balance to our courts, and we are full steam ahead to confirm more mainstream and qualified and diverse judges as they become available.

BUILD BACK BETTER PLAN

Mr. SCHUMER. Now, on Build Back Better, Mr. President. Yesterday was another productive day as we make progress towards finalizing President Biden's Build Back Better plan.

After another vigorous, spirited caucus lunch, meetings continue with Senate colleagues and members of the White House, as well as with the President. An agreement is within arm's length, and we are hopeful that we can come to a framework agreement by the end of today; but we must—we must—continue working a little more to make sure it is the best deal possible for the American people.

I am working especially hard to strengthen Medicare and make prescription drugs more affordable. Senator SANDERS has worked hard to push for many of these Medicare provisions, and I support them.

At its core, the goals of Build Back Better are about restoring the middle class in the 21st century; helping people who are in the middle class stay there; helping people who are struggling to get to the middle class to get there; and give more Americans the opportunity for good, fulfilling lives and better lives for their kids. And, of course, we must take bold action to tackle the climate crisis, which could overwhelm our globe all too quickly if we don't act.

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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